

## Message Text

SECRET

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15  
ACTION ITF-05

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EA-06 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05

NSCE-00 SP-02 L-01 SR-02 ORM-01 SCA-01 PRS-01 SSO-00

/044 W  
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R 290720Z APR 75  
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5581  
INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE  
AMCONSUL SYDNEY

S E C R E T CANBERRA 2629

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: AEMG  
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON:  
PROPOSAL ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

REF: STATE 097854

1. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE FROM OTHER EMBASSY REPORTING, MODEST NUMBER OF ADULT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES SO FAR RECEIVED (76 AS OF APRIL 29) HAS STIRRED UP CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL STORM IN AUSTRALIA. OPPOSITION LEADER FRASER HAS STRONGLY CONDEMNED LABOR GOVERNMENT ACTION ON REFUGEES AS INADEQUATE, ALL OF AUSTRALIA'S MAJOR DAILY NEWSPAPERS HAVE DENOUNCED GOVERNMENT ON ISSUE, AND BROAD RANGE OF RELIGIOUS, COMMUNITY, AND ACADEMIC LEADERS HAVE EQUALLY EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION WITH GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE.

2. IN COURSE OF OUR CONTACT WITH GROUPS OF AUSTRALIANS, WE HAVE BEEN MADE WELL AWARE OF DEEPLY-FELT CRITICISM OF MANY AUSTRALIANS OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE, OR LACK OF IT. WE HAVE, OF COURSE, HAD TO KEEP OUR HEADS DOWN AND AVOID DOING OR SAYING ANYTHING EITHER TO PRAISE

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OR TO CONDEMN LABOR GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS ON HANDLING

REFUGEES. DEPT. WILL SIMILARLY WISH TO AVOID APPEARING TO TAKE SIDES IN WHAT PROMISES TO BE INCREASINGLY BITTER FIGHT OVER WHAT GOVERNMENT COULD DO OR FAILED TO DO FOR REFUGEES.

3. IN THIS CONTEXT AND IN VIEW OF VERY GREAT NEED U.S. IS FACING IN ARRANGING FOR RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIAN REFUGEES WHO HAVE ALREADY LEFT INDOCHINA, GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA MIGHT NOW BE RECEPTIVE TO DOING SOMETHING MORE SUBSTANTIAL TO ASSIST IN RESETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA OF REFUGEES ALREADY OUT OF VIETNAM. WE BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE MERIT IN EXPLORING THIS PROPOSAL WITH PRIMIN WHITLAM PRIOR TO AND DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON MAY 7-8. IN VIEW OF SHARP DOMESTIC CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE, IT QUITE POSSIBLE WHITLAM MIGHT BE RECEPTIVE TO SUCH A PROPOSAL, ALTHOUGH CURRENT FAST-BREAKING TRAGIC DEVELOPMENTS IN SAIGON COULD CHANGE THINGS AROUND.

4. THERE IS LITTLE POINT IN RAISING THIS WITH ANYONE EXCEPT WHITLAM, WHO IS NOW IN JAMAICA FOR COMMONWEALTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE. HOWEVER, RAISING MATTER SOONEST IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE WITH AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR SHAW MIGHT HAVE ADVANTAGE OF HIS BEING IN A POSITION TO PASS ON SUGGESTION BY WIRE TO WHITLAM FOR HIS CONSIDERATION IN ADVANCE OF TALKS IN WASHINGTON.  
GREEN

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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